



# fish & wildlife

## Fish and Wildlife Tribal Activities

Indian tribes are important partners in the Bonneville Power Administration's efforts to protect and enhance listed anadromous fish and to mitigate for wildlife losses. BPA's official Tribal Policy recognizes Indian nations as sovereigns whose decisions can affect Indians and non-Indians both on and off Indian reservations. To further BPA and the Tribes' shared goals, BPA funds tribal land acquisitions, fish hatcheries, habitat restoration programs and other projects.

Land acquisition is a process where BPA (and perhaps other entities) purchase land and then transfer it to an entity that manages the land as they see fit. In 1999, the 35,000-acre Pine Creek Ranch was acquired and eventually given to the Warm Springs Tribes. Through their management of the ranch, the Warm Springs Tribes are improving riparian areas, including spawning and rearing areas for one of the few remaining native steelhead populations in the John Day Basin, by removing culverts and controlling noxious weeds. By allowing streambeds to revegetate naturally, the Warm Springs Tribes are enhancing water quality and providing crucial wildlife habitat.

Fish, especially salmon, have a profound economic and cultural importance for most Indian tribes in BPA's service area. One method of fish recovery is to use hatcheries to augment the number of fish in the river system. BPA fosters tribal participation in this recovery strategy by funding Tribal hatcheries. In 1997, BPA financed the Yakima Fisheries Project, a group of four tribal hatcheries that aimed to enhance the production of spring chinook salmon in the upper Yakima basin. Biologists estimate that the operation of the Yakima Fisheries Project has accounted for 70 percent to 90 percent of the increase

of these spring chinooks from about 3,000 fish per year to 15,000 fish per year or greater since 2001.

Dam construction has altered wildlife habitat in the Columbia River Basin in addition to fish habitat. BPA funds habitat restoration efforts in league with Indian tribes to mitigate for the loss of wildlife habitat. The sharp-tailed grouse is a threatened species in the state of Washington and its single largest sub-population exists on the Colville Tribal Reservation. Through funding from the BPA, the Colville Indians are developing a habitat management plan that will plant deciduous trees and native shrubs to improve the sharp-tailed grouse's habitat. In addition, they are embarking on an ambitious research, monitoring and evaluation effort to ascertain where the best nesting areas are and if male and female sharp-tailed grouses use habitat differently.

Dam operations that BPA and other entities associated with the Federal Columbia River Power System undertake have important impacts on fish and wildlife. BPA coordinates specific procedures with affected Indian tribes to ensure that their perspective and rights are accounted for in the final action.

Columbia River tribes have a history and culture that is several thousand years old. BPA seeks to employ their wisdom and expertise by making tribes active partners in guaranteeing that all of the Northwest's residents will be able to share in the Columbia River Basin's natural heritage in the future.

